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The Hero

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Pippa Passes—1940

Betty Bice

The year's at the spring—
(The world's at war.)
The lark's on the wing—
(The bomb planes soar.)
Morning's at seven—
(At dawn a nation fell.)
God's in his heaven—
(And men in their own hell.)

The Hero

Dick McCarthy

Johnny Downs wanted to be a hero;
So he practiced for a hero's role—
Thrust sharp jabs at a burlap bag
With the bright steel of his bayonet;
Fired endless rounds at the black orb
On the official fifty-meter target;
Marched long miles under a full pack,
And marched and turned and wheeled
Until he became lean and hard and quick,
And poised for battle.

Then he was ready.

Johnny Downs was gloriously slain
By a precise mathematical formula
Scientifically applied to a long-range gun
By a stoop-shouldered technician
Twenty miles behind the lines.